

Proposed FY11 Budget Policy Guidelines (SO'K, 10/26)

OVERALL: The Select Board supports maintaining core services at sustainable levels. We recognize that further reductions in service scope across many or all departments may be necessary to achieve sustainability. We believe that traditional program categories such as recreation and senior services are within that core and should not be eliminated. We consider intense evaluation of the current range of municipal services and their delivery methods to be critical for making decisions with the highest budget impact and lowest citizen impact.

EXPENSE REDUCTION: The Select Board continues to support regionalization, reorganization and reassigning services outside of the general fund when such initiatives would reduce costs and realize efficiencies.

NEW REVENUE: The Select Board will ask voters for an override of the Proposition 2 ½ property tax limit in the spring. While the size and structure of the override question are not yet known, it is expected to be the smallest amount necessary to maintain core services at sustainable levels in the near-term. We continue to support the pursuit of new revenue through expanded arrangements with the University and Colleges and through new and increased fees. We also continue to support actively pursuing economic development; and advocating for State legislation that improves local taxation options, increases aid to Amherst, or mitigates onerous mandated costs.

CAPITAL: The Select Board continues to support funding capital investments by means other than the capital budget where possible, including through the use of Community Preservation Act funds, through shared purchasing and ownership with other towns or entities, and through bonding or borrowing for large long-term projects.

RESERVES: The Select Board opposes reserve use to fund ongoing expenses. We support careful and strategic reserve use as a bridge to either anticipated revenue or a planned expense reduction.

Proposed Department Head Questions (SO'K 10/26)

I suggest pursuing these questions separate from our policy guidelines. The answers will be important for helping to better understand and possibly refine the budget recommendations that Larry will ultimately make to us. But unless we want to get very specific with our guidelines – i.e., “cut program/service X, or cut person/position Y,” – then I don’t think the answers to such questions directly inform the guidelines.

General Questions:

- 1) Are any of your Department’s functions mandated by State or Federal law? If so, what are they?
(Ask of Health, Senior Center, Community Development, Conservation, Planning, other?)
- 2) What non-required/non-mandated services and programs does your department provide?
(Ask of Police, Fire, Town Clerk, other?)

Department-Specific Questions:

- 3) Planning and IT: Please describe what the different staff members in the department do. Are the staffing levels or the specific positions and responsibilities different than in other communities, and if so, why? If not, why might that be a common perception?
- 4) Conservation: Please describe the labor and resource needs related to conservation land: acquisition, maintenance, etc.

More questions would be good, but this is all I have come up with.